

Part 2 : Visit to Saqqara

On the last day of my visit to Egypt, I decided to spend time examining some of the other pyramids which are not very far from the Giza Pyramids. On making enquiries, my guide suggested that we should travel south to the Step Pyramid of Saqqara which according to archaeologists are even older than the Giza Group! They lie about eight miles south of the town of Giza and the easiest way to get there was by taxi. The journey to Saqqara was relatively uneventful, except that the track went through the green lush Nile valley which was very refreshing in the vast expanse of the desert. From time to time we heard the sound of artillery and cannon fire in the background where various army manoeuvres were in progress not far from where we were. However, I was assured that we would not encounter any difficulties. It was sad to note that in a country which is so full of ancient history, grandeur and learning that people should be channelling so much of their time and energy in destruction instead of construction.

Throughout my visit I had noticed that the trend was common everywhere. Development had come to a grinding halt in Cairo and elsewhere because of the war. The locals themselves were not happy at all. There was general discontentment at the situation which was affecting their livelihood as so many people were dependent upon the tourist trade. The same theme applied at Giza where the number of visitors was minimal.

When we finally arrived at Saqqara, I was struck by the more peaceful and quiet setting of the ancient ruins which lay there. It was unlike Giza which is highly commercialised, noisy and with activity going on all day long. I preferred the more secluded location of the Step Pyramid.

After a short walk along a tarmac road we proceeded towards the pyramid which was a rather disappointing, dilapidated structure. It was made in the shape of large steps and was somewhat similar to some of the pyramids to be found in South America. Naturally the stone-work was nowhere near the perfection of the Giza Pyramids. The stone blocks were average size similar to those used in ordinary buildings and would probably weigh between 40 to 50 pounds each. Some type of mortar was used to hold them in place. The monument did not strike me as being exceptional in any way. The outer faces of the stone

blocks seemed very badly damaged and it appeared as if the whole structure was about to collapse. It did not take me long to conclude that here indeed was a construction of the Egyptians. More than likely it was used for mummification of some pharaohs and the corresponding black magic which went with it. I perceived a distasteful atmosphere from it and was not too keen to hang around for long. I had even less desire to go inside.



Fig. 1 : Step Pyramid of Saqqara seen from the lush green Nile valley

As we walked past the crumbling structure my guide informed me that it was unsafe to go inside. How historians could justify that the monument was older than the ones on the Giza plateau baffled me. I was not particularly impressed by what I saw except that it was worth a visit in order to make some comparisons with the original pyramids.



Fig. 2 : Step Pyramid of Saqqara.



Fig. 3 : Stone masonry at close range of the Pyramid of Saqqara

We examined some of the ruins in the neighbourhood. The complex reminded me of the old town of Pompeii at the foot of Mount Vesuvius in Italy. Here though the stone masonry was of superb quality and high standard. The Egyptian government was spending a lot of money towards uncovering more ancient ruins, as well as re-furbishing the broken ones to bring them to their original state. That way people would have a better appreciation of what the place would have looked like in the days gone by.



Fig. 4 : Refurbishment in progress at Saqqara.

Viewing further south from Saqqara, we could clearly see the two Bent Pyramids at Dashur which were about eight miles away. Even from that distance I could see and feel that the general construction and the stonework was similar to the ones at Giza and they were very old monuments. They are built in two portions: the lower faces of the four-sided construction slope at an inclination which is probably steeper than the slope of the Great Pyramid and half way up it decreases abruptly, and continues at a constant angle to the apex. Thus it is bent in its slope and derives its name from that feature. Unlike the Step Pyramid, I felt a definite pull towards them. I would have liked to have gone to examine them, but there was not enough time as I had already made some other plans.



Fig. 5 : Bent Pyramid of Dashur

My guide later suggested that we should visit some underground chambers nearby which had just been discovered and unearthed and were causing a lot of interest among archaeologists. So we walked over the desert sand along a dust track towards a tiny construction about half-a-mile away. The day was perfect and being in February it was not too hot and uncomfortable. I have always been fascinated by the vast expanse of the desert which fills me with awe and has such an overpowering effect on me. Many a times I have imagined myself walking through a desert to gain inspiration to make me realise my own insignificance and appreciate the vastness of creation.

After walking for a while we came to a road which indicated the direction towards the entrance although from there we could not see any opening. Eventually we came to a large depression in the desert floor from where a downward shaft led to a massive complex of underground chambers. We walked down the main passage until we came to a T-junction. I was surprised to see shafts about 40 feet wide and 20 feet high stretching in both directions to the left and right, as far as the eye could see. Viewing straight ahead were more parallel shafts stretching into the distance. As we walked along the first shaft there were wide openings on each side where lay very large stone structures.

When we walked closer to one of these cavities, I was shocked to see a massive stone monument shaped like a sarcophagus. It measured about 35 feet in length, 10 feet wide and was about 4 feet high. It appeared to be sunk into the ground so it could be a lot deeper. Although it was rectangular in shape, the four corners were truncated to form an octagonal shape in plan-view. It was covered with a lid which was about 18 inches thick. My guide informed me that the monolith weighed 100 tons! He then further stated that nothing had been found inside these monoliths. This had puzzled the archaeologists and historians working on the site who were desperately trying to unravel the mystery of their latest findings.



Fig. 6 : An enormous typical sarcophagus in the underground network at Saqqara.

The sheer size of each sarcophagus was a marvel in itself. The stonework was perfect and of the same standard as that found in the Giza Pyramids. Upon reflection, the shapes looked similar to the mental visions of rectangular boxes I had seen inside the Great Pyramid. I felt that there was some link. The surface finish of the outer faces as well as the cavity forming the sarcophagus were machined to perfection. It could probably be reproduced using today's advanced technology but to carve it out of a single large boulder would present some interesting challenges. The whole construction appeared to be made from granite which is a very tough stone. The sarcophagi in the Giza Pyramids are also made from granite

How massive constructions weighing 100 tons could be shifted over a desert terrain was beyond comprehension. I estimate that there must be several hundred of these sarcophagi in the underground complex. There are just too many loop holes in the traditional concepts regarding the method employed to build large structures using slave labour. The sheer technical and financial management of shifting just one of these monoliths using crude physical labour is awesome. It would be interesting to get a group of engineers and scientists to compute the method and effort required to accomplish such a task. It is worth remembering that a similar construction could have been achieved using a concrete mix with steel reinforcement as used in modern buildings.



Fig. 7 : View of a lid on a sarcophagus in a cavity.



Fig. 8 : Closer view of the lid. Note the near perfect finish of the final product.

The underground site was well arranged and appeared like a massive machine shop. The perfect geometry and overall layout of the large number of sarcophagi present indicated more of a mechanism of some sort rather than an arrangement of coffins for burying large giants! So exactly what function the set-up played in the distant past will remain a mystery until sometime in the future a true metaphysician can tune into the mind belt and unravel the truth.



Fig. 9 : Massive statue of a pharaoh made in alabaster at Memphis.

Having spent some time at Saqqara, we drove back north again to visit the famous historical site at Memphis. After that we visited Cairo and then back again to the Mena House Hotel at Giza. In the early hours of the following morning I was on my flight to East Africa to commence yet another spiritual project.